

These animals are active at night and eat a wide variety of foods including fruits, vegetables, pet food, insects, birds, rodents and garbage. They are attracted to residential areas by the presence of food, water and shelter. By eliminating access to these three items, the animals often will leave the area.

Since each of these animals can carry a variety of serious diseases for people, dogs and cats, it is very important to prevent these animals from living in close proximity to residential areas. Some of these diseases can be transmitted from their urine and feces. Bites and scratches from these animals should be treated immediately by a doctor or a veterinarian.

PREVENTION MEASURES

FOOD: Pick up fallen fruit and harvest fruits and vegetables as soon as they are ripe. Do not leave pet food and water out during the night. Pets should be kept in a secure enclosure or inside your house or garage at night.

Make sure your garbage cans have tight fitting lids.

Small pits, 3-5 inches across, in a yard or garden is an indication of foraging for worms and grubs. Larger areas are sometimes dug up. To eliminate this source of food, treat the soil with an insecticide labeled for use on lawns or in gardens. Drying up the area may also help.

WATER: Remove or empty pet water dishes each night. Special water spigots for pets can be attached to outdoor faucets if your pet must remain outside at night. Fix leaking outdoor faucets and set sprinklers to water after dawn.

Ponds can be eliminated as a water source by lowering the level of the water to about 8' below the edge and altering the landscaping to reduce access. A wire mesh or heavy plastic screen can be suspended 2-4" over the pond's surface. Chicken wire is suitable if set high enough.

SHELTER: Typical shelter locations are under houses, porches and decks or in garages, storage sheds, wood piles, and dense shrubbery. Raccoons and opossums can nest in dense trees as well.

Install heavy wire 1/4" mesh under porches and attic and foundation vents and bury the bottom of the mesh 12" down into the soil where necessary. If you suspect an animal is living under the porch or house leave a 4" gap in the mesh somewhere. Sprinkle flour around this gap. If no tracks are seen for three straight days, the animal is no longer using the area.

The mesh can also be formed into a funnel with an opening of about 6 to 12 inches, depending on the animal, to get the animal out sooner. Skunks are small, opossums are medium and raccoons are large.

Trim branches 10 feet from the roof and climbing plants 2 feet below the roof edge to prevent raccoons and opossums from getting on roofs. Screen your chimney opening. These steps are also good to reduce fire hazards.

CONTROL MEASURES

The simplest method to control these animals if the prevention measures did not cause them to leave is to trap them using a cat or dog trap. These traps can be purchased at some hardware or animal supply stores. Traps are also available from this Department (deposit required) and many city animal control offices (some required a deposit and rental fee).

Do not relocate trapped animals without permission from the California Department of Fish and Game because this may spread diseases and the animal usually doesn't survive in unfamiliar territory.

Do not leave a trap unattended for more than 24 hours. Leaving an animal in a trap during the day is cruel. Shade the trap if you will not be able to check it first thing in the morning. Traps should be unset during the day to avoid catching other animals.

Traps can be baited with almost any food. Place the trap near the area where the animal go under the house, digs in the garden, etc.

Trapped animals can be picked up by the local animal control agency.

Skunk odor can be removed with dilute vinegar or tomato juice followed by shampoo.

LEGAL STATUS

Opossums and skunks may be taken at any time without a permit. Raccoons are furbearing mammals and require a permit from Fish and Game to remove.

OPOSSUM



Front Foot



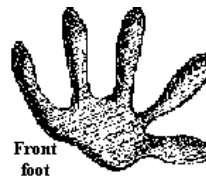
Hind Foot

SKUNK

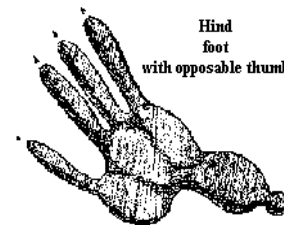


Hind
foot

RACCOON



Front
foot



Hind
foot
with opposable thumb

SOLVING WILDLIFE PROBLEMS

**Raccoons
Opossums
Skunks**



**San Bernardino County
Department of
Agriculture/Weights &
Measures
1-800-734-9459**

Paw Prints by Kim A. Cabrera